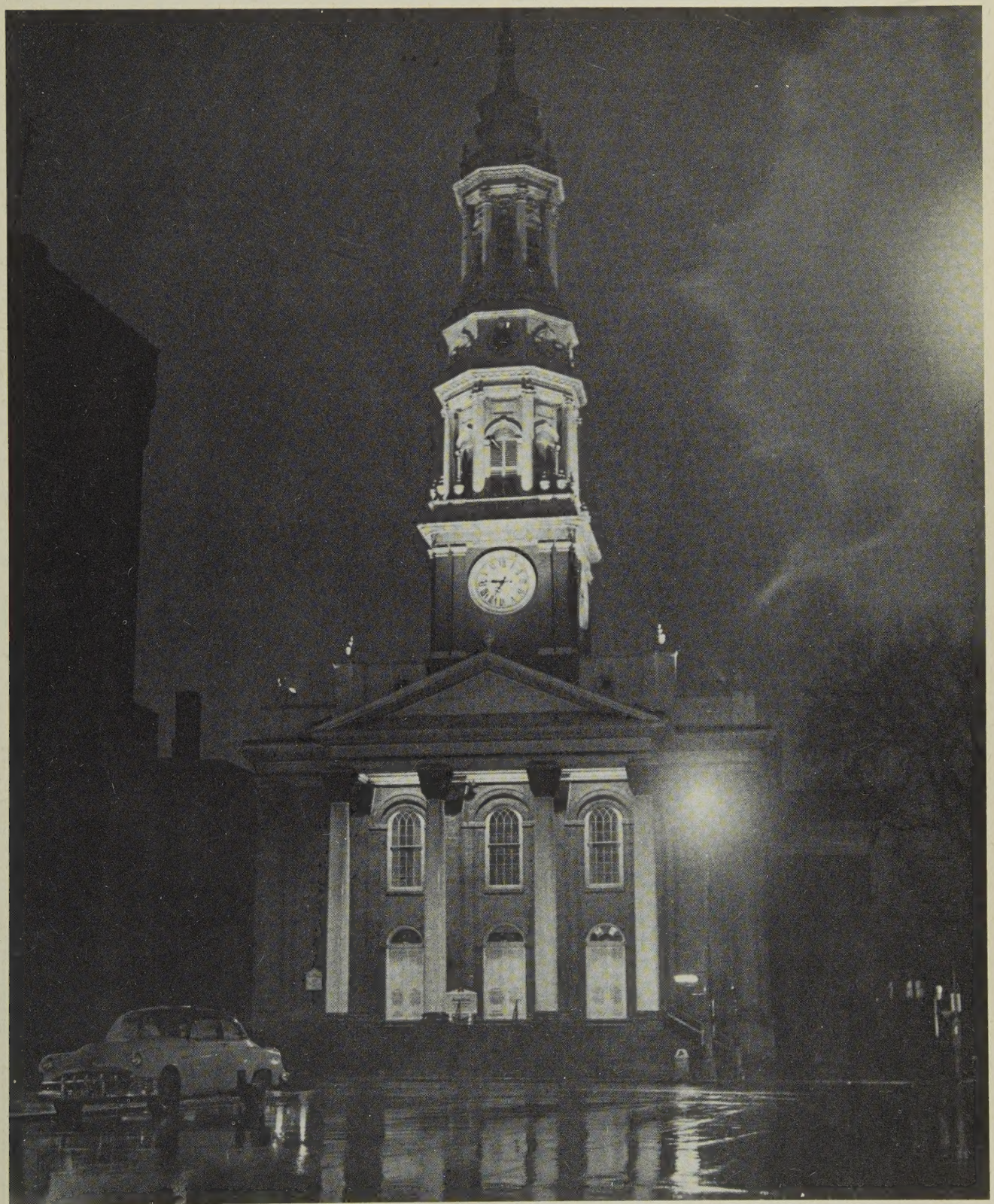
The Congregationalist



"The Light Shineth In Darkness"

VOLUME 2 DECEMBER, 1959 NUMBER 11

NEWS NOTES

The President of the Congregational Christian Historical Society has appointed a special committee to be responsible for the gathering of all material which may be of value to future students or writers who may be seeking authentic information about the issues involved in the discussion of union with the Evangelical and Reformed Church. This committee consists of Rev. John A. Harrer, Librarian of the Congregational Library, Rev. Charles C. Merrill, and Rev. Joseph J. Russell. Printed matter, letters, and other things which may be useful for this purpose should be sent to Mr. Harrer at 14 Beacon St., Boston 8, Massachusetts.

On October 25, at the First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa, Gary W. Smothers was ordained to the Christian ministry. The sermon was preached by the pastor, Rev. Max Strang, and the prayer of ordination was offered by Rev. J. Richard Wagner of Cedar Rapids. Mr. Smothers, a graduate of Andover Newton, is Assistant Pastor of First Church.

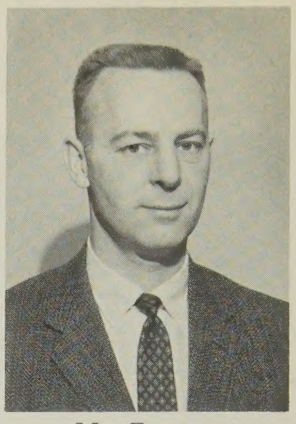
Church Treasurers and others who are sending money to the various organizations working for Congregational causes are reminded to send to these organizations in separate remittances, that there may be no mistake made as to the group for which they are intended. Checks for the support of the National Association should be to the order of Don E. Zentner, Treasurer, and mailed to 176 West Wisconsin Av., Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin. Those for the Missionary Society of the Congregational Christian Churches and the various projects to which the funds are to be channeled, should be payable to Howell D. Davies, Treasurer, and sent to him at Room 2308, 100 North LaSalle St., Chicago 2, Illinois. Accompanying letters should state clearly for what purposes the funds are designated. Remittances for the Committee for the Continuation of Congregational Christian Churches should be to the order of A. W. Converse, Treasurer, and sent to the Committee at Room 2308, 100 North LaSalle St., Chicago 2, Illinois. Your cooperation will help all of us.

IN MEMORIAM

Mr. Frederick M. Holbrook, a member of Arbor Grove Congregational Church, Jackson, Michigan, and an ardent defender of our Way, died on September 29, 1959, at the age of 84. Rev. Charles J. Treka, for 46 years pastor of the Cyril Congregational Church of St. Paul, Minnesota, died on October 8, 1959, aged 91 years.

As we go to press, word comes of the death on November 9 of Mr. Edward M. Arnos of Toledo, President of the Ohio Congregational Christian Council, and a Trustee of Defiance College. Mr. Arnos was 72 years of age.

OUR NEW TREASURER



Mr. Zentner

At the Annual Meeting last summer, it was decided to move the Treasurer's office from Oregon City to Milwaukee. As a consequence, a new Treasurer was chosen to take the place of Paul R. Biggs at the conclusion of the calendar year.

It has more recently been decided that it would be wise for the transition to take place during the first part of December. Thus, a word is in order concerning our new Treasurer.

He is Don E. Zentner. A banker by profession, he is Assistant Vice-President of the Wauwatosa State Bank. He is an active member of the First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa, having been chairman of the Board of Deacons, and currently serving as a member of the Board of Christian Stewardship. He has taught Sunday School for five years.

Don is married. His wife's name is Helen. They have two children — David, five, and Sally, three. Though he does not get to play as much as he would like, he is an excellent golfer. During the winter months he participates in the sport of curling.

Don is thoroughly committed to the Congregational way of church life. He will bring to his tasks as our Treasurer not only his skills and experience in dealing with financial matters, but also a sound knowledge about our cause.

After December 1, 1959, contributions to the National Association should be sent directly to the national office at 176 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin.

"The Light Shineth In Darkness"

Our cover picture shows the spire of South Congregational Church, Hartford, Connecticut, illuminated against the darkness of storm clouds, symbolic of the light of a free Christian faith shining amidst the stormy times in which we live.

THE CONGREGATIONALIST is published and circulated monthly except August, by the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches of the United States. Executive Secretary, Rev. Neil H. Swanson Jr., 176 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin. Eastern Field Representative and Editor of THE CONGREGATIONALIST, Rev. Joseph J. Russell, 61 East Street, Melrose 76, Massachusetts.

Change of address notices, undeliverable copies, orders for subscriptions, and other mail items should be sent to the Editor.

Subscriptions $2.00 a year, Sponsoring Contributions, $5.00 or more a year. Club rates to Churches, 25 or more subscriptions $1.00 each a year. Remittances to the order of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches may be sent to the Editor or to the National Association's Milwaukee office.

Second class postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts.

A MESSAGE FROM SAVOY

Rev. Arthur A. Rouner, Jr., Newton, Massachusetts

(*Continued from the November Issue*)

What was it that these saints at Savoy were concerned to say to themselves and to the world? What was the cause for which they pled?

Not the cause of freedom. I am convinced as I read the Savoy Platform that it was not freedom that stirred the hearts and roused the passions of those men. Their concern was for Christ. It was He to whom they were dedicated; He who had demanded and won their devotion and their loyalty.

They couldn't say enough about Him, those men at Savoy. They marvelled at how His Spirit had dwelt among them in their meetings. They stood amazed at how He had led them deeper and deeper into a oneness of spirit and a unanimity of conviction which they had never experienced before.

Their concern was not only to tell the world that Christ had been there at Savoy with them, and that they believed in Him, but also that they were determined to live for Him in a unique and radical way. This was the real burden of their message: a Way of life — a life in Christ, as new as their own generation, and as old as the Church itself.

To Be the Christian Church

These men had hardly even begun to call their way "Congregational." This way of Church life which they had found themselves to be living, and which they had come to Savoy to write down and describe, was the Christian Way! They were not trying to be a denomination, or a sect, or a splinter group, or anything else! They were trying to be what they felt the Church of England and the Church of Rome before it had failed to be. They were trying to be the Christian Church. The Congregational Way in the minds and hearts of those Savoy divines was simply an attempt to recover the essential life of the New Testament Church.

> "What we have laid down," they said, "and asserted about Churches and their government, we humbly conceive to be the order which Christ Himself hath ordered to be observed . . ."

These were the principles which the polity section of the Savoy Platform was trying to lay down. It is in this section that the Savoy Declaration is most unique, and from which its real message to modern Congregationalism comes.

The Sovereignty of Christ

The first great principle proclaimed at Savoy was the sovereignty of Christ. It was Christ, and no king or bishop who was the head of the Church. His was the only authority they recognized for their Churches, and for themselves as Christians.

> "By the appointment of the Father," they said, "all power — of the church — is invested in a Supreme and Sovereign manner in the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head thereof."

The second great principle at Savoy was the idea that the Christian Church in its truest and most concrete form is the Gathered Church: the Church in a given geographical area, made up of particular people living as neighbors and friends, and coming together simply by their common love for Christ to serve and live for Him. This is what made them a Church, and the only thing they believed could make any body a Church. The presence of Christ, calling His people together, not the ecclesiastical fiat of a pope or bishop: this, they believed, is what makes the Church a Church.

A third principle of Savoy was that the only authority the church needed for the testing of its faith and the common discipline of its life was the Bible. The Anglicans could have their "Book of Common Prayer," and the Presbyterians their "Book of Order." But as for the Congregationalists, the Bible would be their book!

> "To each of these Churches thus gathered," they wrote, "according unto His minde declared in His Word, He hath given all that Power and Authority which is in any way needful for their carrying on that Order in Worship and Discipline, which He hath instituted for them to observe."

The historic biblical idea of organization by a free covenant relation rather than by ecclesiastical hierarchy was another precious principle of Savoy Congregationalism.

> "The members of these Churches . . ." they said, "do willingly consent to walk together according to the appointment of Christ, giving up themselves unto the Lord, and to one another . . ."

Furthermore, it was believed by those men that the people are the Church, and that therefore it was the people's privilege to elect other members to the Church, to elect their own minister, and indeed to ordain and install him by themselves.

"In the Midst of Them"

This principle, and all the others set forth at Savoy, were based on the one greatest principle of all. At the heart of their whole understanding of the Christian Church and at the very root of their conception of Congregationalism was this final belief: that Jesus Christ, by the power of His Holy Spirit, would be with them if they met faithfully in His name, and that He would Himself be their guide. Their assumption was that Christ would make His will known through the gathered people. They could imagine no way of Church life more direct, more authoritative, and more Christian than this.

The way of Church Life which these saints at Savoy had evolved was the way of the Spirit. It was utterly free, and yet disciplined by an obedience to the most powerful authority any man ever had — the authority of Christ Himself.

They called their way Congregational, and yet they believed in their hearts it was Christian — the Christian Way: the way Christ had always intended His people to live. To them it was utterly a people's Church, as the name "Congregational" implies, and yet for this very reason, most fully Christ's Church. For here, in direct relation to ordinary men, gathered together in churches, Christ could most perfectly make His will known and use the lives of men to His purposes.

Here then, in this rare combination of freedom within the higher discipline of obedience to the Holy Spirit, the men at Savoy rediscovered and offered to the world, a way in which all Christians could walk.

(To Be Concluded)

NATIVITY STORIES AND THE GOSPEL

A Christmas Editorial

THE FIELD OF THE SHEPHERDS, BETHLEHEM
(*Photo by Henry David Gray*)

It has been said so many times that the usual Christmas observance takes attention away from the message of the season, that we sometimes overlook one way in which the true message has been obscured in the churches themselves. Too much of our traditional Christmas in the churches has been afflicted with a sentimentalism which hides a truth which should be made more evident. The Nativity stories in the gospels are indeed poetry, and it is fitting that this element in them should be emphasized, but when poetry becomes sentimentalism, it weakens the real meaning which must have been in the minds of the evangelists of long ago.

Why These Nativity Stories?

It is probable that when the gospels were being written there were a good many Nativity stories and legends current among Christian people. Do we ever stop to ask why the two with which we are familiar were the only ones to be immortalized in the New Testament? If one asks this question, he may find that the answers will vary according to the theological beliefs of the ones who reply.

Whether one is a believer in the literal inerrancy of the Bible and answers, "These were chosen by divine inspiration," or whether he is a "higher critic" and gives a very different answer, do we not all agree that there is in each of the two Christmas narratives something very near to the heart of the gospel itself? Yet how often this is obscured when we see only the poetic or sentimental side of it!

Shepherds Were Not Mystics

No church-goer or reader of the gospels needs to be told that the account given in St. Luke of the angels' message to the shepherds is one of the most beautiful and appealing stories in all literature. The prose of the English Bible does not conceal the truly poetic nature of it.

Nevertheless the beauty of the poetry may blind us to the deeper message of this story. We usually think of the shepherds as devout, meditative people. How many of our Christmas sermons and pageants give us that impression! It was something of a shock to this writer, when he was in the parish ministry, to be told by a parishioner who was a teacher of ancient history,

well read in the customs and beliefs of ancient times, that shepherds in those days were regarded very much as cowboys were in the old West in our own country. Rather than dreamy mystics living out under the stars in quiet meditation, they were usually a rough and tough lot. To have a band of shepherds come to town was good reason for self-respecting people to stay behind barred doors.

Yet, says this gospel story, it was to this kind of disreputable folk that the first message of "a Saviour which is Christ the Lord" was given! But that fits in perfectly with the story of One who "came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." The One who mingled with publicans and harlots was well typified in the story of the angels' message to disreputable shepherds.

Yet in our modern church activity, just how much time and effort do we give to trying to reach the disreputable elements in our communities? How hard do we try to tell them of One who "came to seek and to save that which was lost"? We count on our Christmas offerings to help balance the budget at the end of the year, or sometimes for some special benevolence. But do we, at this season, think what we can do toward reaching out to those in our city slums and our rural slums to tell the Christmas message to the very kind of people among whom Jesus walked, and bring them genuine evidence that He offers them something exceedingly precious? When we of the well-known, respectable denominations wonder why it is that the gospel missions and "fringe sects" are growing faster than we are, do we ever ask ourselves whether this may be because they are doing something truer to the genuine and original purpose of the church than we are?

The Wise Men Were Foreigners

Likewise the other great Nativity story too often draws our attention to superficial matters. The star is something which arouses our curiosity, and we let it become nothing but a wonder-tale. Sometimes earnest Christians, seeking to reconcile the gospel story with modern astronomy, inquire whether there may not have been some conjunction of the planets at that time to have caused the appearance of a "Star in the East."

But marvellous as the story is, when we leave it there we miss the point. The liturgical churches observe the coming of the Wise Men as "the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles." From this we of the other churches may well learn a lesson. The Wise Men were not of the race which expected God's greatest revelation to come to them.

This, too, fits in with the gospel narrative itself. The Parable of the Good Samaritan, teach though it does the meaning of the word "neighbor", should not blind us to the fact that the good neighbor was a foreigner. And why else should we have the question at the end of the story of the healing of the ten lepers, "Was no one found to return and give praise to God, except this foreigner?"

Yes, it is vital to provide good religious education for our children. It is fitting indeed that our houses of worship be well kept up and that our services have worthy music. But if we forget that there are "foreigners" who need our help, whether they be refugees from Communism who have never heard the good news that is in Christ, victims of famine who need our help, or the men and women in our own communities who are of different racial origin than ours, we are not living up to the meaning of Christmas. We shall not be unless we remember that it was to all men that the Lord Jesus came.

OUR DEVOTIONAL COLUMN

"A Silent Night"

Rev. William F. Behr
North Royalton, Ohio

As I think of Christmas, many sounds come to my mind, with pictures and remembrances of things past. I am almost overwhelmed by such a crush which seems to grow in intensity with each passing moment. To think through, to hold fast, amid this blast is almost unendurable.

I struggle for balance; I strive for meaning;
I seek release from my aloneness.

When all seems lost and I can hold no longer, when all that Christmas has come to mean has virtually overwhelmed me, and my most precious possessions seem about to be swept before this increasing tidal wave of Time . . . suddenly all sounds and strivings cease. A quietness settles over my mind and heart. I stand on a hill. There are shepherds keeping watch over their flocks. It is night.

The shepherds tell the story of One who was crucified and yet, even now, walks among men. They do not understand why I seek a child in a manger. I try to push through this curtain of time, yet words hang so heavy . . .

"I was hungry and you fed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was naked and you clothed me." . . .
"When, sir, did I so give to you?"
"Inasmuch as . . ." What unforgettable words!
"Inasmuch as you have done this unto the least, you have done it unto me."

All of this is wonderful and fine and belongs in the everyday part of my affairs, but Christmas Day is something different. Christmas is something special. I must say that I resented the intrusion of such words and thoughts at this particular time.

On this hillside I saw enacted pages from the book of history that startled me. The dress and manner of the speaker were not as in times past, but of my own time and place!

"Inasmuch as you did it not."
"When, Lord, when did I not?"

Yet even as I spoke, I was aware that I had not. I fell upon my knees before Him, clutching at His robe, imploring another chance to begin anew. "Take me to that manger. Let me lay my gifts at His feet!" I had struggled so much with my gift list to come up with this. I knew He would appreciate it, perhaps even judge me differently. If only I could go back to the beginning, to this Child!

Then the words — or were they thoughts I always knew? "You cannot go back to the cradle for this Child has become a Man." "Then how can I find Him?" One goes to Christmas only through the life of this Jesus. Yes, in the everyday expression of one's life.

I found myself clutching at empty space for support at what I thought was His robe . . . Then a blinding light and a voice uttered to me on this hillside at night, as I stood by the flock: "I bring you good news which shall be to all men . . . Go, Tell, Share."

Would I listen to this voice? Would I listen this year? If only I could still the noises and confusion that swell around the holiday season! If only I could be still and others around me know of His abiding presence! For the door to Christmas can only be rightfully approached through giving everyday expression to this Life.

WOMEN'S WORK

Mrs. Robert E. Collins, Grand Rapids, Michigan

"SCRAMBLING" THE GROUPS

In recent years so called "Scrambling" the women's groups has been given prominence in some churches, not only our own denomination but others. Where it has been put to use, there have been varied results. Whether it would work in your own church or not depends on each church to decide. The purpose of your women's group in relation to your church is a determining factor.

Because we have received inquiries about it, we are presenting the following: Mrs. George Bohman tells how it was introduced in their Church in Royal Oak, Michigan; and Mrs. M. D. Baldwin tells how we do it in Mayflower, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

We Do It This Way

Mrs. Melvin D. Baldwin, Grand Rapids

I once heard a prominent clergyman say, "No church can function without a Woman's Organization. No church can function successfully unless that Woman's Organization is well set up and happy." How true that was and is.

We all know what the women of the church do. We realize how much they contribute in enthusiasm and general all around effort. Who gets most of the people to church in the first place? The women.

They pry the men loose from the Sunday papers, they inject the children into their Sunday clothes and then they start the family group off on time, each one with his envelope in his pocket. For most of the men that ends it until the next Sunday morning when the same performance is the order of the day.

What Do the Women Do?

But what do the women do? They proceed to go to weekday meetings, they figure out clever ways to earn money so that they will be in a position to pay with a smile the many bills that the Trustees are always able to thrust into their hands. This requires careful planning. How shall they go about it? What better way could there be than to set up smaller groups within the larger group of the Woman's Organization? What types of women work together? I hold that women of similar age and interests are more likely to produce good results than a widely mixed group. I have belonged to a church group for 45 years which has remained essentially the same for that time. It has been a wonderful group, producing much real leadership in the church during the years. Naturally it has had changes. Deaths, removal from the city and other things have caused a variation in its lists. The group has not in any way been a closed one. I strongly believe that no church group should be that. We have welcomed new members who have been suggested by the Membership Committee of the Woman's Organization and have promptly put them to work. Some of the best friendships in my life have come from the associations in that group.

Our Way Works

So feeling that way, I want to say that I am strong for our set up, contrasting it more than favorably with the "Scramble System" that puts the names of the women in a hat and then proceeds to draw out the names of the women who are to work together for the coming year. By our system the group is set up and ready to go. By the other the group must first be organized, must find out what the women can do and then must proceed to get them to do it.

We meet twice a month. If the "Scrambled Group" should meet only once a month as many do, see what would happen. One sixth of the year could easily slip away before the group was ready to function successfully. In that time we would have the reins firmly in our hands and would already be over the second hill and it wouldn't be to the Poor House either.

We Tried "Scrambling"

Mrs. George V. Bohman, Royal Oak, Michigan

Three major organizational problems that cried for solution set the Women's Fellowship of Royal Oak, Michigan's First Congregational Church to a careful consideration of circle arrangements. Two of our circles were so large they could no longer meet in homes as they preferred — and were still growing. Three circles whose members were predominantly over sixty years of age were not growing and were finding their numbers of active workers steadily dwindling. Finally, the new members of our church were not being absorbed in circles at a rate comparable with the rate of our church membership growth.

There was also a strong community of interest among members of the youngest circle and of course some resistance to the proposed change in other circles as well. The motion failed to carry the specified two-thirds vote by only a small margin.

A New Approach

Within a few weeks the executive board received a communication from one of the two largest circles which invited any other circles, and individual members of circles, or any women not already circle members to join them in "Putting their names into a pot" to form a group of rotating circles. To make an already long story short, a committee worked out the details of the organization and once more every woman in the church received a letter, this time outlining the plan and enclosing a card for registering if she wished to be in-

continued on page 11, column 1

TO MAKE AN INTELLIGENT ANALYSIS

The Detroit meeting reported in the November CONGREGATIONALIST stated its purpose in this question, "How can we help the Churches in an intelligent analysis and discussion of the proposed Constitution and By-Laws for the United Church of Christ?" The report of the Findings Committee contains a brief analysis of the material presented and discussed in the four seminar sections, a revised copy of a commentary on the documents under discussion presented to the conference by Judge Henry A. Middleton of Ohio, and a brief account of the closing session of the conference.

Legal Questions

In the seminar on "A Legal Analysis of the Proposed Constitution and By-Laws" the points brought out included that the proposed Constitution and By-Laws may well be studied by comparing them with the Constitution of the Congregational Christian General Council, the documents outlined in the Report of the Committee on Free Church Polity and Christian Unity, the Constitution and By-Laws of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and Conference, Association and local Church Constitutions and By-Laws.

Such a study will show, it is believed, that the proposed structure of the United Church is the antithesis of Congregational polity.

Under it no local Church can select a delegate to the General Synod, propose or vote upon amendments to the Constitution, or on further unions.

The "freedoms" supposedly "guaranteed" to the local Churches are largely removed or limited in some sections of the Constitution and By-Laws and can be removed by the power to amend which is retained by the General Synod and the Conferences. Some sections are open to broad interpretations as well as amendments.

Detailed Analysis

The draft of the proposed documents should be studied to determine the effect of each provision upon the complete autonomy hitherto enjoyed by all Congregational Christian Churches, the significance of omissions in the Constitution, and the impossibility of welding together free Churches into a centralized structure in which they will still be free and autonomous.

These matters are especially serious in that the new structure will have authority from the top down, will have a great degree of control of the ministry, and that the Churches which vote themselves into the United Church will be unable to remain what they are today.

The autonomy guaranteed to each Church "in the management of its own affairs" does not mean what Congregational autonomy has always meant. The "affairs" of a Congregational Church have never before been limited in a document of this nature.

It should be noted that real and effective control over all affairs of the United Church of Christ is placed in the General Synod, the 21-member Executive Council, the 5-member Administrative Committee, and the President of the United Church. The control over the local Churches through the ministers is spelled out in the Constitution, Article 5, Section 25, and By-Laws, Article I, Section 1–33.

How to Plan Meetings

This Seminar pointed out the various types of meetings which could be called, including small groups in homes of interested members, study group meetings, local Church meetings, and Councils of Concern. In all cases the purpose of the meeting should be clearly stated, and procedures will vary with the type of people expected, whether pro-union people, pro-and-con people, or those who thus far appear indifferent. With well-informed speakers on both sides, or panel discussions, always with questions from the floor, the facts can be brought out clearly. Questions from the floor should be answered by speakers from both sides. All differing opinions should be treated with respect.

How to Persuade Others

This is the greatest problem which we face among the indifferent members and "neutral" Churches. To arouse interest, local newspapers and radio stations may be asked to invite people who want information to make inquiries from certain individuals. The reading of important books, the mailing of literature, and the calling of special Church meetings often produce results.

In all meetings, no reference to personalities should be made, all statements should be factual, the common ground and concern all Christians have should be emphasized, and all emotionalism and sarcasm should be avoided. In all discussions it should be remembered that pro-unionists are as sincere in their beliefs as pro-Congregationalists are in theirs.

In Our Next Issue

The "Approach to an Analysis of the Proposed Constitution" submitted by the Hon. Henry A. Middleton of Ohio, and a brief report on the final plenary session of the conference in Detroit, will appear in THE CONGREGATIONALIST for January, 1960. All persons who wish the complete report of the Findings Committee are invited to write to Rev. Neil H. Swanson, Jr., 176 Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin. Among the resolutions adopted at the closing session is one in which it is urged that "all Congregational Christian Churches vote on the Constitution when the final draft is presented."

According to the schedule announced at the General Synod meeting at Oberlin last July, this presentation to the Churches will come in the autumn of 1960. The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches and THE CONGREGATIONALIST will always be ready to supply interested people and Churches with material which will be useful in arriving at their decision as to how to vote. Remember that unless and until your Church has voted favorably on the final draft of the Constitution, which will not be presented until next Autumn, or has voted to become part of the United Church of Christ even though it does not approve the Constitution, it is still a free Congregational Christian Church. Only its own action can make it anything else.

For the Findings Committee.
Rev. Walter J. Vernon, Anaheim, California, Chairman
Mrs. James Solberg, Alhambra, California, Secretary

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches publishes THE CONGREGATIONALIST, but it is not responsible for the opinions or statements of the writers who contribute to its columns. Every effort is made to exclude erroneous statements, but it must be said of the contents of this periodical, as was said long ago of the findings of Congregational gatherings, "These words have as much weight as weight of wisdom in them lies."

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP

What Congregationalism Means To Me

Miss Linda Audette, Derry, New Hampshire

Miss Audette

Every Christian church offers certain values to young people. Education in moral truths is one. Another is the opportunity to associate in worship, work, and recreation with other people who have similar aims and ideas. And it extends to a teen-ager guidance and a steadying influence during a trying period of life.

If these values, important as they are, were all that Congregationalism offered a youngster, it wouldn't make much difference whether he joined that denomination or any other. But a Congregational Church holds out to him an even more valuable concept: freedom, complete freedom of belief. No prefabricated creed is forced upon him. There is room in this church for the immature gropings and healthy doubts that lead eventually to a firm, vigorous personal faith. Through such trial-and-error searching a young person learns independent thought, discriminating appraisal of ideas, and respect for his own intellect.

Congregationalism also offers the teen-ager an awareness of our national traditions and a first-hand experience in grass-roots democracy. The Pilgrims sowed the seeds of national liberty and Congregational beliefs at the same time, and ever since then the ideals of the country and the church have gone hand in hand. And the independence and self-government of each local church give a good example of undiluted democracy.

Like any great privilege, the freedom that Congregationalism is based upon can be misused. We cannot take it as an excuse to drift through life with no beliefs just because the church prescribes none. Rather we must seize this opportunity and challenge to consider carefully what we want to reject and what we want to believe. Then, armed with self-respect and pride in our national and religious heritage, we are ready to defend the dignity and worth of every individual against tyrannical ideologies that would crush men's souls into submissive sameness.

PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS

Miss Marilyn Heaney, Secretary

December 20: Do We Need A Religion? How often have we stopped to think why we have religion and why it is necessary to help us live successful lives? A religious person always has something constant to rely on as a comfort and strength when transitory things fail. Can a man who has no religion live as full and purposeful a life as one who does? (Resource material, *Credo*, by T. S. Kepler.)

December 27: Religion in Teen-age Life. Does religion play a major part in teen-age life? Look at your friends and see if their actions are influenced by religion. Perhaps now would be an opportune time to begin serious thinking about your own Christian ideas and whether or not they are directing your thoughts and actions in everyday circumstances. (Resource material, *Theology for Youth*, by Henry David Gray.)

January 3: If Christ Came Today: What? Many theologians contend that if Christ were to come into the world today, he would again be crucified. How did they arrive at this conclusion, and what are your opinions on the subject? Do you think people would acknowledge Him as Christ?

January 10: College, For What Purpose? The space available for students at college is decreasing yearly, comparatively speaking, with the growing number of young people who desire to enroll. Why do so many desire to attend college? Certainly enriching our lives spiritually and learning to get along with others through Christianity should be two of our reasons. How does religion enter into the purpose of securing higher education? (Resource material, *How To Plan For College* by J. B. McReynolds and *How To Make Good In College* by R. B. Hamrich.)

January 17: Literal Word Or Living Word? Theologians of different schools disagree on many passages of the Bible because some are interpreting it literally and others in a way applicable to everyday living. Which way do you believe is correct, and why? (Resource material, *Foundation For Reconstruction* by Elton Trueblood.)

January 24: Sacramental Authority or Spiritual Experience? Congregationalists believe in the right of every person to interpret Christ's teachings and the Bible the way he feels is best. We also feel that Communion is a symbol of our devotion to Christ and that anyone who desires to improve his life may partake of the sacrament. Other churches, however, believe in interpretations set up by people in authority and feel that the sacraments have certain powers in themselves. Why do we feel that our ideas are better? (Resource material, *The Church* by Emil Brunner.)

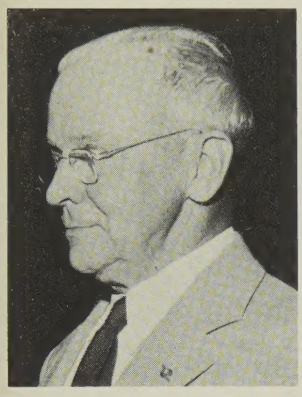
January 31: Code or Conscience? Several churches have written rules as to how one must act and think if he is to be a member. Of course, the basis of our religion rejects this idea completely and we believe in the freedom of each person to make decisions for himself. It might be interesting to have a debate on the merits of each of these ideas. (Resource material, *Visible Saints* by G. F. Nuttall.)

continued on page 9, column 1

GREETINGS FROM YOUR MODERATOR

To Congregationalists near and far — wherever you are:

A Merry Christmas



Mr. Kingsbury

As you think of your Christmas and the planning you will do to make this one a better Christmas for others, I suggest you review the following quotation from James Wallingford.

> "There is Christmas Eve, there is Christmas Day, and there is the Day after Christmas. Where now are the glad expectations of Christmas Eve and strange joys of Christmas morning?
>
> When passed, Christmas may seem as a dream, a beautiful dream from which we must awaken to the hard realities of the world and life. It is then that we must realize that Christmas is not a day or a season, but a condition of heart and mind. If we love our neighbors as ourselves; if in our abundance we are poor in spirit and in our poverty we are rich in grace; if our charity vaunteth not itself but suffereth long and is kind; if each day dawns in opportunity and sets in achievement, however small: then every day is Christ's day and Christmas is always near."

Remember the simple way Charles Dickens expresses the same thought:

> *"I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year."*

Gordon W. Kingsbury, *Moderator.*
Lathrup Village, Michigan.

Pilgrim Fellowship (*continued*)

A Message From the National President

With the coming of the birthday of Christ, our thoughts turn to world peace. Gautama Buddha, in the 6th Century B.C., said, "To one in whom love dwells, all in the world are brothers." As Christ was born to teach love, so should we sacrifice ourselves to continue His work.

Robert Bohman, Royal Oak, Michigan

Some Christmas ideas: Caroling for shut-ins in our own Church; Christmas tableau for church supper; dinner baskets for needy families; Christmas observances in other lands; study of Christmas story and what it means today.

Congregational Bookshelf

Guest Review by Rev. Thomas J. W. Cornish
Cornish, Maine

LIFE IS COMMITMENT deals with "the rise of science and the growth of technology" and "the resolve of man to use his technical skill to shape his environment, his society, and himself and to control his destiny." It is the author's contention that this cannot be done. If we are Christians in the modern world we must have a total view of life to set over against the picture of reality which is inescapably imposed upon us by the conclusions of modern science.

Man needs more than science. The laboratory cannot teach what love is — or hate, for that matter. The essence of man is found only in community, in the meeting of man with men. The book touches on the thorough-going secularization of life. Many are saying, "God is dead; let us get down to the business of seeing what man can make of his destiny." Christians are faced with learning to talk with those on the other side of the gulf. You cannot commend your faith to those who have no notion of what you mean. The first thing to be done is to establish communication. To this end there must be commitment to God in every way.

A living faith, the author reminds us, is not something we have to carry, but something that carries us. The chapter on Christ is worth the price of the book. The writer deals with the church and says, "Society cannot dispense with the church. The profane needs the holy to save it from superficiality and aridity." For him the church is essentially the fellowship of persons.

And there is the world. The writer sums up his work by saying, "In its heart and essence the Christian decision is the decision to live in the actual world of nature, history and society by the powers of faith, hope, and love." (J. H. Oldham, LIFE IS COMMITMENT, Association Press, 50 cents.)

DO YOU REALIZE THAT

1. **An overall Constitution is in itself alien to Congregationalism?**
2. **Your Church will no longer be a free and independent Church, sovereign in its own right?**
3. **No matter what the Constitution says, it can be amended so that all our supposedly guaranteed freedoms can be taken away?**
4. **Ministers will no longer be free to choose their own seminary so that this is the end of academic freedom for our fellowship?**
5. **Freedoms stipulated in paragraph 21 are contradicted in paragraph 32 and elsewhere?**
6. **The proposed Constitution outlines a church structure from the top down, not from the Churches up?**
7. **Churches will no longer be represented by their delegates in Synod?**
8. **Congregational churches cannot vote themselves into a denomination of totally different legal structure and still remain Congregational?**

ORTHODOX AND LIBERAL

(This is the third and final instalment from the manuscript submitted by Rev. Royal G. Davis in the Savoy Tercentenary Contest.)

The Unitarian Controversy is a landmark in early 19th Century Congregationalism. Most people think of the "Unitarian Departure" as a matter of pure theology. "Do you believe in the oneness or the triunity of God?" Without denying the crucial importance of the doctrinal issue, we must consider other aspects. Only on the surface was the debate over theology. For one thing, it was a crisis over the very definition of Congregationalism as a free church form of Christianity.

Distinguished ministers and laymen were on both sides of the debate conducted throughout the Congregational fellowship. The usual claim that all the intelligent and respectable men were on one side and all the ignorant on the other has little factual basis. Both groups within Congregationalism had able defenders and affluent supporters.

Written into the very structure of Congregational polity is the guarantee of theological freedom. During the 19th Century Horace Bushnell could be a liberal because his local Church supported him against the heresy hunters of the consociation, and Park Street Church in Boston could be gathered to promote High Calvinism despite opposition from the liberal-minded Boston Congregational Association. We sometimes forget that evangelistic Christianity has as much to lose from centralized church control as any of the various types of Christian modernism.

The Battle Begins

The Unitarian debate became the Unitarian departure when Churches and ministers ceased to be true to Congregational principles. At Worcester in 1785 the "rational Christians" left First Church to organize one of their own and call a minister of their theological persuasion. In 1792 the reverse took place in Taunton when the Calvinist minority withdrew from the Congregational Society to build a Trinitarian Congregational meeting house. These events and many like them followed Congregational procedure to the letter. They were no better or worse than the much earlier establishment of Old South Church in Boston or South Congregational Church in Hartford.

The wiser Orthodox Congregationalists furthered their cause by being more determined and dedicated than ever. They gave liberally for new church buildings, often called Trinitarian, Orthodox or Evangelical. The foolish, of which there were distinguished representatives, tried to exercise control over the liberties of Congregational Churches and ministers. In 1802 a convention was held at Northampton for the purpose of organizing a General Association of Massachusetts, limited to ministers of the Orthodox Congregational party. The plan was for the Churches to adopt Trinitarian creeds as the basis for membership and for ministers to exchange pulpits with none but Orthodox clergymen.

Channing Defends Congregational Liberty

The first great attack on the idea behind the General Association came from the minister of the Federal Street Church in Boston. Throughout his remarks William E. Channing criticized the General Association as fundamentally inconsistent with the principles of Congregationalism.

> "It is a melancholy fact that our long-established Congregational form of church government is menaced, and tribunals unknown to our Churches, and unknown, as we believe, to the Scriptures, are to be introduced; and introduced for the very purpose that the supposed mistakes of ministers and private Christians may be tried as heresies, that is, as crimes. In these tribunals, as in all ecclesiastical bodies, the clergy who make theology their profession, will of necessity have a preponderating influence, so that the question now before the public is in fact only a new form of the old controversy which has agitated all ages; namely whether the clergy shall think for the laity or prescribe to them their religion.
>
> "The time is come when the friends of Christian liberty and Christian charity are called to awake and to remember their duties to themselves, to posterity, and to the Church of Christ. The time is come when the rights of conscience and the freedom of our Churches must be defended with zeal."

Dr. Channing was speaking as a Congregational minister within the context of basic Congregational principles of long standing. What he said was deeply rooted in the traditional Congregational position. To paraphrase his argument, we believe in a covenant fellowship rather than a credal organization. We believe in the complete liberty of the local Church under Christ to determine its own affairs in its own way. We believe in the New Testament ideal of the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace which allows differences of opinion within the oneness of Christian discipleship. We believe in the priesthood of all believers rather than a clergy-dominated, clergy-oriented church. We believe that genuine Christianity is best promoted without interference from outside ecclesiastical organizations trying to dictate to the particular assembly of Christians gathered in a local Church.

From the Orthodox Side Also

From the Orthodox Congregationalists came an equally incisive defense of the autonomy of the local Church in opposition to the plan for government by associations. Nathaniel Emmons' sermon entitled "Platform Of Ecclesiastical Government Established by the Lord Jesus Christ" outlined and defended the historic Congregational position with vigor. Later, Professor Williston Walker concluded, "To Nathaniel Emmons Congregational polity is more indebted than to any other leader of the 18th Century, not excepting John Wise."

Emmons spoke for the New Divinity of Jonathan Edwards and the Consistent Calvinism of Samuel Hopkins. No one could or did ever question his devotion to the Orthodox wing of the New England Churches. Born at East Haddam, Connecticut, and educated at Yale, he had the advantage of seeing what consociationism was doing to the freedom of Congregational Churches. From 1773 to 1827 he made his Church at Franklin, Massachusetts, the center for revived Congregationalism both in theology and polity. His manse was actually a one man seminary from which a hundred

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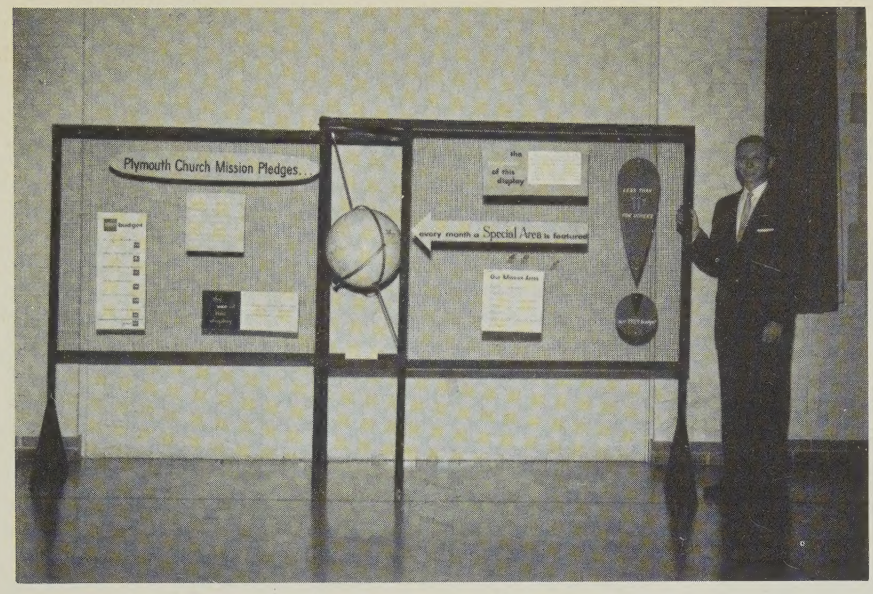

Display Panel To Portray Missions

The display panel pictured here was designed and built for Plymouth Congregational Church, Wichita, Kansas, by Stan Haring, a commercial art graduate of the University of Wichita (formerly Fairmount College, established by Congregationalists). The display is used once a month, with a different field of interest represented each month.

This is an important part of the regular program of Plymouth Church for missionary education, and is considered a matter of first importance by the Christian Missions Council of the Church. The response of the members to this program is most encouraging, and indications are that the missions budget will continue to increase.

The display stands 6 by 10½ feet, and the material costs about $60.00. It is easily disassembled for flat storage. Plans are available for other Churches desiring to follow this example. Anyone who is interested may write to Mr. Paul A. Miller, 834 South Dellrose, Wichita 18, Kansas.

WOMEN'S WORK (*continued from page 6*)

cluded in the drawing for rotating circle membership. Over eighty women attended the Rotation Tea and approximately one hundred thirty names were registered for rotation. Four daytime and two evening groups were formed which now work side by side in Women's Fellowship projects with one another and with those circles which chose to retain their former mode of organization.

It is still too early to evaluate accurately the extent to which we have solved the three major problems that led to this two-fold plan of re-organization, but there have been many favorable comments.

In the late fall of 1957 the outgoing president of the Fellowship appointed a committee to study the problem and bring a report. In March, 1958, the committee voted unanimously to make its report to the Fellowship in the form of a panel discussion which would culminate in a motion that all the circles would join in a plan of rotation effective the following January providing it was approved by two-thirds of those members present and voting. It was the strong feeling of the committee that for the sake of unity in the Fellowship and harmony within the circles a vote indicative of support by at least two-thirds of the membership was advisable before adopting a policy admittedly so controversial — hence that proviso.

They Hesitated At First

This meeting had been well publicized through the church bulletin and by post card to each circle member and to every woman member of the church who was not a circle member. There was a record attendance. The members of the study committee were assisted in their panel presentation by the president of the Detroit Association Women's Fellowship and together they presented a strong case in favor of a system of rotation.

In the course of the discussion it became apparent that while the older circles were distressed at their inability to do as much as formerly, they were even more disturbed at the thoughts of severing ties that had in some cases existed for twenty-five to thirty years.

It has been a real adventure on a hitherto uncharted course but one well worth the effort in that it has provided freedom of choice for women of differing convictions and brought into active participation a number of women who had previously not been circle members.

ORTHODOX AND LIBERAL
(*continued from page 10*)

youths were trained for the New England ministry. As first president of the Massachusetts Missionary Society he spread his influence across the frontier and around the world.

When the General Association of Massachusetts was first proposed to unify and strengthen the Churches, Emmons issued his famous protest: "Associationism leads to Consociationism; Consociationism leads to Presbyterianism; Presbyterianism leads to Episcopacy; Episcopacy leads to Roman Catholicism; and Roman Catholicism is an ultimate fact." In his sermon of 1826 Emmons explained the positive features of Congregational churchmanship, a form of government which he believed to have been established by Jesus Himself and documented in the New Testament.

Hidden in the collected works of Emmons, preached in 1826 but not reprinted since 1860, unread and unnoticed by most, is this brilliant exposition of Congregational polity. Here are the Biblical roots of our free Church way, and here is a landmark in the expression of what Congregationalism should mean. In any discussion of what we stand for, the ideas of Congregationalism's "second father," as H. M. Dexter calls Emmons, should be of signal importance.

By 1850 the Plan of Union was doomed, the Unitarian controversy a matter of tragic history, and Congregationalism was reasserting its manifest destiny. For the last half of the 19th Century we note the positive action which could be taken within the context of free church liberties. Congregationalism proved itself in the men it produced and the movements it promoted. The glory of our Churches comes from the individuals with ideas and the voluntary support they received from particular organizations.

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FROM THE LETTER BOX

EDITOR, *The Congregationalist*

I have been deeply interested in the article by George E. Mitchell in the October number. It duplicates so much my own experience. I grew up in a Methodist family in Mount Forest, Ontario, a town about seventy miles from Toronto. I had never heard of Congregationalism or of a Congregational Church, though I later met the late Robert Y. Blyth, who came from a Congregational group about thirty miles from my home. He died recently after a long and distinguished Congregational ministry in Ohio and the Middle West.

My first contact with Congregationalism was as a student in Toronto. I had completed two years of preaching probation and study, and had just graduated in theology from the Methodist Victoria College. I would have been ordained had I not felt restless and asked the Conference to defer my ordination for a year.

In the meantime I met a student who asked me if I would contribute a Sunday's preaching to a little church in the East end of Toronto. It was the Broadview Avenue Congregational, and its former pastor, the Rev. J. P. Gerrie, then editing THE CANADIAN CONGREGATIONALIST was in the congregation. He invited me to come to his home, and as he told me something of Congregationalism I realized that this form of free fellowship, that required nothing from me but allegiance to the Jesus of the New Testament, was very much what I had been rather blindly seeking.

I was called to the Church, ordained there in the Fall, and later also succeeded Gerrie as Editor. He and I were like brothers, and I have never known a finer man, or a finer type of Congregationalist. He later, in World War I, served in much danger as chaplain on transports subject to constant submarine attack.

My six years in that pastorate were notable for many things, perhaps chiefly for the fact that though I was called to other Churches I was determined to stay with this congregation, composed, except for one so-called "cuff and collar" bank clerk, entirely of "working people." As my salary at its highest was never more than $1,200, without a parsonage, I had to solve much of the bread-and-butter problem myself. I was at one time writing some news for a daily, editing two weeklies, and writing all the articles for a monthly fraternal order paper. I had never up to the time of my call to Boston in 1922 anticipated anything but a lifetime in the parish ministry, but one can understand the great value of this earlier enforced writing when I was suddenly called to edit THE CONGREGATIONALIST.

I have never regretted the step that brought me into Congregationalism, but perhaps one thing about the transition from Methodism ought to be understood. I have often said that if one has been a real Methodist he never gets over it, and I'd never wish to get over it.

It is largely a matter of how one estimates freedom. My fellow Methodist students thought of it in terms of a strong organization back of them. A Methodist Conference took care of its own in any conflict with a local church. Freedom for them meant security.

Church Union in Canada has been so widely publicized that I venture to point out an essential matter usually overlooked. If Methodists and Presbyterians could compromise their historic and doctrinal differences (about 30% of the Presbyterians refused to do so, and have continued as Presbyterians) the union meant only the merging of two strong denominations into a larger one, but for Congregationalists it meant the complete wiping out of the independent principle. I suspect that is why able Congregational ministers like the late Frank J. Day and the late Matthew Kelly chose to follow me to the U.S.A. and continue as active Congregationalists in Illinois. Day, I happen to know, was a deeply disillusioned former advocate of the union.

William E. Gilroy

Newton Centre 59, Massachusetts.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL EFFORT

(To Be Called S.E.E.)

Rev. Neil H. Swanson Jr.

As a result of the conversations held at Detroit during the first part of October, a special nationwide educational program in regard to the proposed Constitution of the "United Church of Christ" will be sponsored by our National Association in cooperation with all interested Congregational groups.

The purpose of this program, which will be called S. E. E., is to provide for adequate study and discussion of the Constitution by the greatest possible number of our Congregational people. It implements a motion approved by the delegates at our Los Angeles Annual Meeting.

Already many aspects of S. E. E. are under way. We will outline the details of the plan in a future number of THE CONGREGATIONALIST.

Since this will be a project over and above our regular program, extra funds must be secured to underwrite the expenses. After considerable consultation it seemed wise to set a goal of $50,000 for this program. We have been challenged by one of our devoted friends in Minnesota, who has said that he will raise $25,000 in that state, if we would raise an additional $25,000 from other sources before December 31, 1959.

Our challenger is as good as his word. As of this writing (October 26, 1959) he has already raised $23,000 from contributors in Minnesota. As of the same date, we have raised $5,500 from other sources. The other forty-nine states must be at least as wealthy as Minnesota. Therefore we should reach our goal!

Money is needed for literature, for study materials, for travel expenses of speakers, for mailings, for extra secretarial service. If you are interested in making a contribution for this nationwide educational program, which will be in process for the next eighteen months, you can send your check to the national office of the National Association, 176 West Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin.

If you want to help Congregational people *see* the real issue, then make a financial contribution to S. E. E.!